

First on-line only issue of the Coalition newsletter!

If you do not get Coalition email updates contact us to be added to the list, mail@earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org. We want to be sure to reach all directors and teachers in Sarasota County!



Florida Core Competencies Approved

The Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners have been approved.

What are the core competencies?

“The Florida Core Competencies is a set of **knowledge and skill standards** that define what early care and education practitioners that work directly with children birth through age 5 **should know and be able to do** in order to facilitate **child growth and development and partner effectively with families.** “

Seven core content areas are addressed in the competencies:

- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Child Development and Learning
- Building Family and Community Relationships
- Teaching and Learning Environments and Interactions
- Curriculum
- Observing, Documenting, Screening, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Their Families
- Professionalism

Within these broad areas the competencies have been organized into 4 tiers, from basic to high-level skills, with expected skills listed for each level, providing a pathway to enter and progress within the early childhood field. Knowledge and skill development generally progresses from **knowing and following** practices to **planning and implementing** activities and procedures to eventually **analyzing and evaluating** programs and practices.

In our community we began implementing trainings around core competencies locally last year. Now that the Florida Core Competencies have been approved we will adopt those standards. The requirement for follow up activities as part of trainings offered through the Coalition is directly related to the core

competencies and the emphasis on transferring what is learned into implementation in the classroom. The goal is to offer trainings that meet a need in terms of content and to present the material in a way that is meaningful and useful and can be put into practice by teachers and directors.



Currently in development are core competencies for directors and early childhood trainers. The Coalition is looking forward to having statewide standards in place that define professionalism across the spectrum of early childhood education. Competencies are posted at www.flready.com.

The Coalition is now on Facebook

Click on the link below to find the Early Learning Coalition on Facebook and sign up to become a fan! Keep checking back as we develop and add more content to our page. [Early Learning Coalition Of Sarasota County | Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/EarlyLearningCoalitionOfSarasotaCounty)



Directors Connection Invitation

Join Claudia Malecki, the new Directors Connections Coordinator, and Coalition staff on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at a new location, **Pine Shores Community Center**.

The first meeting in September was a great time to reconnect with old friends, learn about the Core Competencies, and gather information about Coalition programs and community events. The focus this year is on Directors as **Leaders, Learners, and “Teachers of Teachers,”** with the goal of supporting directors to build their communication, presentation and leadership skills to develop effective staff centered trainings. At the last meeting Meryl Kleiner led directors through a reflective exercise on the factors that shaped them as leaders. All received surveys to take back to their centers and use with their teachers. Directors were also given a binder to keep track of handouts and collect information as they prepare their own staff presentations.

At the next meeting on October 21st Dianne Lawrence will lead an interactive hands-on exploration of the issue of professionalism in early childhood education and the importance of making a commitment to lifelong learning and supporting staff to make that commitment.

Also on hand will be VPK Regional Facilitator Mary Ann Goodrich, with the latest news and updates from the state. Remember to RSVP so we can prepare enough materials for everyone. **See you at the Shores!**

ECA Conference Scholarships

Once again Sarasota County was well represented at the ECA Conference in Orlando with 213 teachers and directors attending – 143 having received scholarships from the Coalition. The ECA Conference is always a wonderful reminder that few professions are as meaningful and rewarding as early childhood education.



SAVE THE DATE! 9th Annual Provider Conference

DATE: **Saturday, January 30, 2010** LOCATION: **TBA**

THEME: **Discovering the Joys of Self Expression**

VPK NEWS

It's Okay to Play in VPK!



This reminder is included because some VPK teachers seem to feel that in order to meet the VPK performance standards child-directed activities and free play must be restricted.

In fact, the Florida DOE Office of Early Learning's position on VPK curricula is very clear on this point, as can be seen from the excerpts below:

- ❖ The curriculum used in a VPK classroom should include **active learning experiences** that are child-initiated, as well as those planned and initiated by the teacher.
- ❖ The curriculum should be **developmentally appropriate**, meaning that it is **appropriate for four-year-olds** and can be modified for individual children who have skills at either end of a developmental continuum (**individually appropriate**).
- ❖ Throughout the course of the day, the curriculum should include **instruction in varying formats**, such as large group, small group, and learning centers. Teachers that use **intentionality** when planning the environment and the curriculum can create high-quality classrooms where four-year-olds thrive and learn.
- ❖ Teachers have a very distinct responsibility to **observe, facilitate** and **scaffold** the activities of the classroom; **it is not developmentally appropriate for four-year-olds to spend extended amounts of time in teacher-directed activities**.
- ❖ As a part of active learning within a VPK classroom, children should be engaged in many **hands-on experiences** throughout the day. Children should not learn about concepts through paper and pencil activities, work sheets, or coloring pages.
- ❖ Healthy learning occurs when the child is engaged in the activity (teacher-or child-directed), and a child's attention span tends to be longer in activities and topics that are of interest to the child.
- ❖ **Early literacy skills** are critical to children's success... There is a large body of empirical research in the area of emergent literacy, specifically phonological awareness and letter knowledge, which shows that daily attention to these skills, as little as twenty minutes a day, can make a significant impact on children's emergent literacy skills.
- ❖ **Early mathematical thinking skills** are also important to children's later learning. Children explore their world as they learn about concepts such as number, shapes, symmetry, measurement, and space through **hands-on** math activities that help children develop **critical thinking skills** that will further children's learning significantly.

The complete document, *Learning Activities and Choosing Curricula for Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Programs*, can be found on the VPK page of the Coalition website, www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org.

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Mary Ann Goodrich, VPK Regional Facilitator, will give updates on the new kindergarten assessment tool that is replacing the DIBELS, and answer VPK questions at the Directors Connection meeting on October 21st.

Trainings, Trainings, Trainings



There are lots of trainings coming up! Be sure to check out our email announcements, Newsletter and Calendar page on the Coalition website.

Lisa Allen, Program Consultant, offers the following thoughts on her upcoming **Phonological Awareness** training.

What if you could significantly increase the chances of your preschoolers being successful in reading once they enter

*school? Would you be willing to make that investment? Well, here's the good news! You can greatly influence reading outcome by offering intentional **phonological awareness** activities on a daily basis. Because this skill involves the **ability to hear and manipulate the sounds of language**, the only materials necessary are a willing teacher with intentional plans focused on phonological awareness activities for 10 to 20 minutes per day.*

This training is for VPK and all directors, teachers and assistants who work with 4 year old children and want to increase their understanding of this critical skill.

October 20 & December 3 – Sarasota

October 22 & December 10 – Venice

Register on the DCF website at www.myflorida.com/childcare

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Coming up on **Saturday, October 24**, from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm is a half day workshop presented by Meryl Kleiner on **Building Relationships**. Strong relationships with both children and their families are the foundation of an early childhood program. Bring your lunch to The Landings and explore strategies to forge supportive relationships, gain insights to ponder, and leave with techniques to take back and use in the classroom.

In-service hours and CEUs available for these trainings. Flyers with details will be coming soon.



**Look for the Stars updates are in a separate attachment.**

Visit our website! Minutes of meetings and scholarship applications are posted. A calendar of meetings is also available, as well as the community training calendar. Look us up and give us your feedback! If any director or teacher would like to receive a copy of this newsletter via email, contact the Coalition at the general email address below.

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